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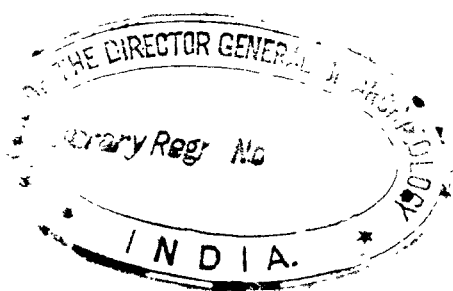
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VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY'S MONOGRAPHS

No. 6.

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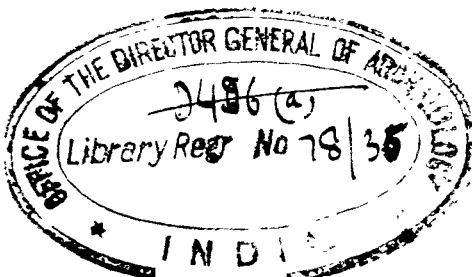
Varendra Research Society,

Rajshahi, Bengal.

March, 1935

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FOREWORD.

In giving the papers in this volume to the public it is my pleasant duty to introduce two of our new workers—Prof. S. Sharafuddin, M.A. of the Bengal Educational Service who is engaged in collecting the Muslim inscriptions of Bengal and Mr. Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, M.A. who as a Government Post Graduate Research Scholar was attached to this Society and has been working upon the art and architecture of Bengal. Mr. Atal Behari Ghosh, a devoted worker in the field of the Tantras needs no introduction.

Varendra Research Society.

March, 1935.

G. S. BHATTACHARYYA,

Honorary Secretary.

Biral Inscription of Sayfuddin Firoz Shah : A. H. 880.

S. Sharaf-ud-Din, M. A., B. L.

Lecturer, Rajshahi College.

This inscription was discovered in 1923 A. D. by Mr. Upendra Prasad Lahiri Chaudhury of Balihar, Rajshahi, in his zemindary in Buzurg Biswanathpur, P. S. Birol, Dist. Dinajpur, a village in which there are the shrines of two saints Burapir and Panchpir. He kept the inscription with himself till very recently he was persuaded by Mr. Kshitishchandra Sarkar, M. A., B. L. of the Varendra Research Society and myself to present it to the Society and it is now being preserved in the Society's Museum. It is published by me for the first time from the original.

The inscription Fig. ¹ which occupies only one side of a rectangular slab of black-basalt measures about $23'' \times 10\frac{3}{4}''$ and consists of only three lines. The characters are of Naskhi type, some of the letters having peculiar formation in angles. The size of the letters vary from $\frac{3}{4}''$ to $3\frac{1}{4}''$. A small portion of the stone in the left corner just below the date is broken but that does not seem to contain any letter. The language of the inscription is Arabic.

The inscription begins with a quotation of the 18th verse of the 9th chapter (Immunity or Repentance) of the *Quran*, which occupies the whole of the first line. It refers then to the well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad, who builds a mosque God builds for him a castle in Paradise, and records the erection of a mosque (in which it appears to have been originally set up) by the exalted Khan Azam (great Khan) the ocean of spirituality, the second Hatim (in liberality), the lover of the learned and the mendicants, styled as Khitab Qira Khan in the reign of Sayfuddunya waddin Abul Muzaffar Firoz Shah in the year 880 A. H.

The Habashi king Sayfuddin Firoz Shah, to whose reign the inscription refers itself, was believed uptill now to have reigned from 892-96 A. H. (1486-89 A. D). In 880 A. H. which is the date of the present record, it is evident that Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah whose inscriptions range from 879-85 A. H. was on the throne of Gaur. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in that year Malik Andil who subsequently became known as Sayfuddin Firoz Shah became a rebel and carved out a small principality for himself in a part of the Sultante of

Gaur. In the inscription under note the use of the words, **خلد الله ملكه و سلطانه** may God perpetuate his kingdom and authority, which are usually applied to a reigning king negatives the assumption of his having been a mere Governor. It is probable also that owing to the influence and strength which he thus acquired he was subsequently appointed as the Commander-in-chief (1) in the reign of Jalaluddin Fath Shah 886-92 A. H. as a pacifying measure.

TEXT.

1st line قال الله تعالى انما يعمر مساجد الله من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر و اقام الصلاة
 و اتى الزكاة و لم يخش الا الله فعسى ان لا تترك ان يكونوا من المهتدين (Quran, IX 18)
 2nd line قال انبى صلى الله عليه وسلم من بنى مسجدا بنى الله له فى الجنة قصرا فى
 عهد السلطان سيف الدنيا و الدنيا ابو المظفر فيروز شاه سلطان خلد الله
 ملكه و سلطانه

3rd line بنى هذا المسجد خان اعظم المعظم بحر المعاني حاتم الانبى محب العلماء
 و الفقراء المخابر خطاب قير خان سلم الله تعالى فى التاريخ الثانى
 و العشر جمادى الاولى سنة ثمانين و ثمانمائة

Translation.

- 1st. Line. God Almighty says (Quran IX, 18) He only should visit the mosques of God who believes in God and the last day and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate and fears none but God. So, it may be that these are among the rightly guided".
- 2nd. Line. The Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Who builds a mosque God builds for him a castle in Paradise". In the reign of Sultan Sayfuddunya waddin Abul Muzaffar Firoz Shah, the king—may God perpetuate his kingdom and authority—
- 3rd. Line. built this mosque Khan Azam (the great khan) the exalted, the ocean of spirituality, the second Hatim (in liberality), the lover of the learned and the mendicants, styled as Khitab Qira Khan (peace of God Almighty be upon him), on the date 12th Jumada-al-ula in the year 880 A. H.

(1) Stewart calls him the 'Commander-in-chief' while the author of the Riyāḍus-Salatin calls him the Premier nobleman.

Rajshahi Inscription of Jalaluddin Fath Shah 887 A. H.

S. Sharafud-Din, M. A., B. L.

Lecturer, Rajshahi College.

This inscription was brought to Rajshahi from Gaur about forty years ago by Mr. E. H. Rudock, the then District Magistrate of Rajshahi and kept in his quarters. After his transfer from Rajshahi it was conveyed to the mosque of the Hetam Khan mahalla of the Rajshahi town by a *mali* (gardener) of the District Magistrate. Since then it was lying in the mosque enclosure. A few weeks ago while I was passing by the mosque it attracted my notice and was on subsequent examination found to be inscribed. Prof. Maulvi Md. Haider Ali, M. A., the Mutawalli and Imam of the mosque was good enough to give me the inscription for my use at my request. I presented it to the Varendra Research Society in whose Museum it is now being preserved. It is published by me for the first time from the original.

The inscription (Fig 2) occupies only one side of a rectangular slab of black basalt measuring about $23\frac{1}{2}'' \times 10''$ and consists of only three lines. The characters are of a fine Naskhi type. The size of the letters varies from $2''$ to $3\frac{1}{4}''$. The language of the inscription is Arabic.

It records the reconstruction of a ruined stone-edifice in the time of the wellknown Makhdum Mawlana 'Ata Wahiduddin in the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Abul Muzaffar Fath Shah (886-892 A. H.), son of Sultan Mahmud Shah I in the year 887 A. H.

A Devikot inscription (*J. A. S. B.*, Vol. XLII, Part. i, pp. 290, 1873. and Cunningham *A. S. R.*, Vol. XV, p. 99) of Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah's reign records the erection of a mosque in 896 A. H. in the time of the wellknown Makhdum Qutb Awliya Makhdum Mawlana 'Ata. I am inclined to think that the saint Makhdum Mawlana 'Ata Wahiduddin of the present inscription is the same person as the saint mentioned in the Devikot inscription. It is highly probable that the saint was generally known as Makhdum Mawlana 'Ata but his proper name was Wahiduddin. In both these inscriptions he is described

as "مشهور" i. e. wellknown but he has not been regarded by Blockmann as one of the principal personages of saintly renown of Gaur and Pandua.¹

Text.

بنى هذه العمارة الحجرية فى عهد منكر وم المشهور ومولانا	1st line
عطا وحيد الدين فى العهد السلطان الاعظم جلال الدين ابو	2nd line
المظفر فتم شاه سلطان ابن محمود شاه سلطان فى التاريخ مشهور سنة	3rd line
سبع ثمانين وثمان مائة	

Translation.

- 1st line :—The ruins of this stone edifice was reconstructed in the time of the wellknown Makhdum Mawlana.
- 2nd line :—'Ata Wahiduddin in the reign of the most exalted Sultan Jalaluddunya wa-ddin Abu
- 3rd line :—l-Muzaffar Fath Shah ² king, son of Mahmud Shah king, in the wellknown year 887 A. H.

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- (i) The principal saints of Gaur and Pandua (i) Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (died in 642 A. H.); (2) Shaikh Akhi Sirajuddin 'Usman (died in 758 A. H.); (3) Shaikh Alauddin Alaul Haq (died in 800 A. H.); (4) Shaikh Nuruddin Nur Qutab Alam (died in 851 A. H.) and (5) Shaikh Raja Bayabani (died in 754 A. H.). *J. A. S. B.*, Vol. XLII, part. i, 1873, pp. 259-62 and notes to p. 260.
- 2) An inscription of this Sultan dated the 10th Jumada 1, 887 A. H. has been discovered in Dhamrai, Dacca. Other inscriptions of the reign of this monarch are from Devikot (Dinajpur) : 886 A. H.; Bandar (Dacca) : 886 A. H.; Kazikasba (Vikrampur, Dacca) : 888 A. H.; Sonargaon : 889 A. H.; Gaur : 889 A. H. Mahdipur (Malda) ; 891 A. H.; Challa Mospue (Gaur) ; Mahidipur (Malda) : 886-92 and Satgaon : 892 A. H.

**A note on the Baigram Copperplate :
Year 128 (Gupta).**

Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, M. A.

This Copperplate was discovered by some coolies while excavating a tank in the village of Baigram, near Hili, which is an important station on the North Bengal section of the E. B. Railway. It was made over to Rai Saheb Kumud Nath Das of Hili, in whose estate the findspot falls, and was subsequently presented by him to the Gauda Research Society of Howrah. Dr. Radha Gobinda Basak, lately of the Dacca University, who, I understand, is editing the plate for the *Epigraphia Indica*, announced the discovery in an Associated Press Message of the 26th August, 1932. The present note is based on my reading of the inscription from an inked estampage, kindly supplied by Pandit Nirad Baran Misra Chakravarty, the Secretary of the Gauda Research Society, to whom my grateful thanks are due.

This is a single plate, written lengthwise on both sides, the first containing fifteen lines, the second the remaining ten. The seal, which is missing, was attached to the left hand side, as is indicated now by a slight projection. The characters belong to the Eastern variety of the Northern Gupta script, generally in use in the 5th century A. D. The language is Sanskrit, and, with the exception of the three imprecatory verses at the end, the whole inscription is in prose. The date, given in numerical symbols in the last line as *Sam 100 20 8 māgha dī 10 9*, apparently refers to the Gupta era on palaeographical grounds and corresponds to 448 A. D. when, to quote Damodarpur copperplates Nos. 1 and 2,—the last being dated in the same year—*paramadaivata paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja śrī Kumāragupta* (I) was ruling the earth. In the present plate the name of the Gupta *Mahārājādhirāja* is not given. But he is mentioned twice in lines 1 and 3 as *Bhaṭṭārakapāda*.

The document records the purchase of some revenue free (*samudayabāhya*—11. 4 & 11) state land—fallow (*khila*—11. 5, 8, 11, 12, & 15), cultivable (*kshettra*—11. 5 8, 11, 12 & 15) and homestead (*vāstu*—11. 9 & 16)—in two localities, Trivṛita

and Śrīgohālī, by two brothers, Bhoyila and Bhāskara by name: i) for the maintainance of the requisites of the daily worship of the Vaishṇavite deity, Govindasvāmin, such as, sandal, incense, lamps and flowers (*gandha-dhūpa-dīpa-sumanaso pravarttanāya*—ll. 7-8); ii) for the occasional repairs to his temple, just erected by their father, Śivanandin (*pitṛā Śivcnandinā kāritaka, Bhagavato Govindasvāminodevakule khaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṁskārakaraṇāya*—ll. 3-4 & 7); as well as iii) for the construction of a resthouse (*talavāṭakārtham*—l. 9). The details of the lands sold were :—lands, both fallow and cultivable, measuring three *kulyāvāpas* in the village of Trivṛita, and homestead land measuring two *droṇāvāpas* in the village of Śrīgohālī, the first for the maintainance of the worship at, and repairs to, the temple, the second for the construction of the resthouse.

The purport given, it at once suggests that, in form and contents, the document in hand closely resembles so many other land sale documents of Ancient Bengal, Viz., the Dhanaidaha¹, the five Damodarpur², the Paharpur³ and the four Faridpur⁴ plates, all referable to the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era. The general procedure of the whole transaction, elaborated in the present case, is practically the same, as found in the other plates. The intending donors approached the District court (*Vishayādhikaraṇa*—l. 1) headed by *Kumārāmātya* Kulavṛiddhi, who was apparently the District officer. We are, however, not informed whether the District officer was assisted in his administration by a Council of Four, of which we have evidence in the Damodarpur copperplates Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5. Kulavṛiddhi issued the charter from Pañchanagarī (l. 1), which was probably the headquarters of the *Vishaya* of the same name. The prayer was granted and state land was ordered to be sold to the applicants after the Government record keepers (*Pustapāla*), Durggadatta and Arkkadāsa, approved of the sale as proper. The land was next made over to the purchasers by this copperplate (*amrapaṭṭena*) on receipt of six *dīnāras* and

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1. *Ep. Ind.* Vol., XVII., pp. 345-348.
 2. *Ibid.*, Vol. XV., pp. 113-145.
 3. *Ibid.*, Vol. XX., pp. 59-63.
 4. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol., XXXIX., pp. 193-216.,
Ep. Ind., Vol. XVIII., pp. 74-86.

eight *rūpakas* (*śaṭ-dīnarān-aśṭa cha rūpckān-āyīkrītya*—l. 14) as price at the established rate of two *dīnāras* for each *kulyavāpa*, as prevailed in the district, and after the proper survey and measurement by the customary reeds. The sale was made on the basis of perpetuity (*akshayanīvyā*—l. 17) The Brahmanas, the administering agents and the chief householders of Trivṛita and Śrīgohāli were duly informed of the sale (*Trivṛita-Śrīgohālyoḥ brāhmaṇ-ottarān-saṁvya-vahāripramukhān-grāmakuṭumbīnaḥ ku'alam-anuvarṇya vodhayanti*—l. 2) and they were asked to measure out and mark the lands themselves in an undisputed area (*avirodhisthāne*—l. 18) and to respect the deed transacted for all time to come (*akshayanīvidharmmeṇa cha śaśvat-kālam-anupālayishyatha*—ll. 19-20). Both the present and the future administering agents (*varttamāna-bhaviśhyaiś-cha saṁvyavahāryādibhiḥ*—l. 20) were enjoined to observe it as a perpetual deed.

That the plate originally belonged to the place where it has been found is evident from the mention of Vāyigrāma in line 2, which is surely the ancient name of Baigram. This Vāyigrāma has also been mentioned in Damodarpur plate No. 3, the land sold by that plate, abutting on the Northern boundary of Vāyigrāma in the south, west and east. Our inscription also gives us the name of a new *Vishaya*—that of Pañchanagarī—the district head quarter (*vishayādhikaraṇa*) being located at a place known by the same name. Though the *bhukti* is not mentioned it is practically certain that this Pañchanagarī was, like Koṭīvarsha (Damodarpur plates Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5) and Khādā (ṭā) pārā (Dhanaidaha plate), one of the many districts into which old Puṇḍravarddhana *bhukti* was divided in the 5th century A. D.

Another important fact, revealed by our document, is that *Kumārāmātya* Kulavṛiddhi, the *Vishayapati* of Pañchanagarī, seems to have been directly appointed by the emperor himself, his epithet, *Bhaṭṭārakopādānuddhyāta* (l. 1), clearly implying such an inference. This however is quite contrary to the scheme of Gupta provincial administration, of which we have a graphic account in the Junagadh Rock inscription of Skandagupta¹ and a glimpse in the Damodarpur copperplates. From these records we come to learn that the provincial governors were appointed by the emperors, and that the former again had the right to appoint local governors. Quite in conformity with this principle we

1. Fleet, C. I. I. Vol, III No. 14.

find that during the period under notice *Uparika Chirātadatta* was governing the province of *Puṇḍravarddhana*, being appointed by *paramadaivata paramabhattachāraka mahārājādhirāja Kumāragupta* (1) himself and that *Kumārāmātya Vetravarmman* was appointed to the *vishaya* of *Koṭivarsha* by the governor (Damodarpur plates, Nos. 1 and 2). But the plate under examination reveals a different state of things in another *vishaya* of the same *bhukti*. Instances of *vishayapatis* being directly appointed by the emperor are however not rare in the Gupta administrative machinery, and we have reference to *Śarvvanāga*, the *vishayapati* of *Antarvedī* (the district lying between the Ganges and the Jumna), being appointed by *Skandagupta* himself (*paramabhattachāraka-mahārājādhirāja-Śri-Skanlaguptasya - ābhivarddhamāna - vijayarājyasamvalsarāśate shat-chatvāriṃśad-uttaratame phālgunamāse tat-pāda-parigrihītasya vishayapati-Śarvvanāgasyāntarvedyām bhog-ābhivṛddhaye varttamāne*—Indor Copperplate of *Skandagupta*¹). But the differences in the status of two official colleagues of the same rank and of the same province—one appointed by the emperor, the other by the provincial governor, himself a nominee of the emperor—looks rather strange and is difficult to account for. It is most probably on this account that neither the *bhukti* nor its governor were mentioned in the present plate.

There is evidence, again, of the fact that the customary rate at which unassessed lands were sold, varied in different districts of Old Bengal. The four Damodarpur copperplates (1, 2, 4 and 5), covering a period of just a hundred years, show that all through this period one uniform rate of three *dīnāras* per *kulyavāpa* was the usual practice in the district of *Koṭivarsha*. The Faridpur plates show that four such coins were charged in an East Bengal district for the same area. The fixed rate for the *vishaya* of *Pañchanagarī* was again two *dīnāras* for each *kulyavāpa*. It is significant to note that the rate for *Chañḍagrāma* (Damodarpur plate No. 3), which is just contiguous to *Vāyigrāma* of the present plate, was also two *dīnāras* as in the *Vishaya* of *Pañchanagarī*. Dr. Basak² explains the lower rate as a difference in the customary rate, prevalent in different villages. Frequent occurrence in these land sale documents of such

1. *Ibid*, No. 16.

2. *Land sale Documents of Ancient Bengal*, Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee volumes, *Orientalia*, pt. 2. p. 493.

passages as '*Iha visahye samudayabāhy-āprahata-khilakshettra dvidī-nārikkyā (tridīnārikkyā, chatur-ddīnārikkyā vā) vikkroy-onuvṛittah*' leads me to think that there used to be one uniform rate prevalent in one particular district and that the usual rate did not vary in case of villages situated in the same *vishaya*. The Damodarpur plate No. 3 does not give us the name of the *vishaya* in which Chaṇḍagrāma was situated. At any rate it was not included in the Koṭivarsha *vishaya*, which was expressly mentioned in all other cases, and in which a different rate in the land sale transaction prevailed. The contiguous position of Chaṇḍagrāma and Vāyigrāma and the same rate of two *dīnāras* prevailing in both would hence suggest that Chaṇḍagrāma of Damodarpur plate No. 3 was included in the *vishaya* of Pañchanagarī of our newly discovered plate. In the Paharpur plate too, which also does not give us the name of the *vishaya*, the usual rate was two *dīnāras* for each *kulyavāpa*, and I should think therefore that the lands sold by that plate were also not included in the Koṭivarsha *vishaya*, as has been generally held. It is not unlikely that Paharpur, which is only 20 miles south west of Vāyigrāma, was also included in the same *vishaya* of Pañchanagarī, but we have nothing at present to settle the point definitely.

The next point, but no less important, is that we have here a reference to both the gold and silver coins of the period. The Gupta gold currency has been frequently mentioned in inscriptions as *dīnāras*, a term which was evidently borrowed from the Roman *denarius*. Amarakosha makes it a synonym for the indigenous term *nishka*. The silver currency, introduced by Chandragupta II and considerably extended by his successors, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta, seems to be for the first time mentioned in our inscription. Here we have not only a reference to the silver coin as *rūpaka*, but, what is more important, we can, from the way in which it is linked with the *dīnāra*, easily ascertain the relation of the *rūpaka* to the *dīnāra*. We are informed from the Paharpur plate that one *kulyavāpa* was equal to eight *droṇavāpas*. According to our plate the price for three *kulyavāpas* and two *droṇavāpas*, at the rate of two *dīnāras* per *kulyavāpa*, amounted to six *dīnāras* and eight *rūpakas*. The price for two *droṇavāpas* was thus eight *rūpakas* and we have already mentioned that eight *droṇavāpas* made a *kulyavāpa*, which was priced at two *dīnāras*. A little arithmetic, and we find that a *dīnāra* was equal to sixteen *rūpakas*.

The record keepers when approving of the sale as proper, occasionally laid down whether the intended sale would be in any way beneficial to the sovereign. Accordingly we have a passage in our inscription where the record keepers approved of the sale, as applied for, by laying down that in such a sale there is nothing prejudicial to the royal interest, rather there is a gain, as (over and above the money that comes in as price) one-sixth of the religious merit accrues to the emperor himself (*evamvidh-āpratikara-khila kshettra-vikkraṇe cha na kaś-chid-rājārthavirodhar-upachaya eva Bhaṭṭārakapādānam dharmma-phala-shaḍ-bhāga-āvāptaś-cha*—ll. 12-13). A similar passage in the Faridpur plate No 1 (*Parama'haṭṭārakapādānam-atra dharmma-shaḍ-bhāga-lābhah*—l. 3) has not, I think, been properly interpreted by pargiter¹ and Dr. Basak², both of whom take the passage to mean that only "one-sixth of the 'price' according to the law goes to the emperor". Dr. Basak goes further and adds that the remaining five-sixths used to go to the funds of the village assemblies. *Dharmma-shaḍ-bhāga* should simply mean one-sixth part of dharmma (religion), and it would be a further stretch of imagination to interpret it as 'one-sixth part of price according to law', especially in the light of evidence supplied by our new plate. *Dharmma-shaḍ-bhāga* of the Faridpur plate actually stands for *Dharmma-phala-shaḍ-bhāga* of the plate under examination and really refers to one-sixth part of the religious merit that would accrue to the monarch himself, and not to that of the legal price going to fill in the royal exchequer. A further confirmation to my suggestion is available from the Paharpur plate where *dharmma-shaḍ-bhāga* (l. 16) had been apportioned to the sovereign along with, and in distinction to, a gain in money (*arthopachaya*—l. 16). These transactions were all made with pious motives, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the emperor, as the supreme head of the state, had had a share in the religious merit acquired by such acts of piety.

The lands sold were ordered to be carefully measured and marked out. The measurement was made by means of *nālas* (reeds) and Dr. Basak seems to be right in holding that each *kulyavāpa* contained an area measured and surveyed by eight reeds in breadth and nine in length (*asṭaka-navakā-nala*—l. 18). The

1. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIX, 1910, p. 197.

2. *Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee silver jubilee volumes, Orientalia*, Pt. 2, p. 487.

exact length of the standard reed of those days are, however, difficult to ascertain, but it had some connection, at least in the *vishaya* of Pañchanagarī, with the cubit length of one Davvika or Davvikarmma (*Davvīkarmma-hastena*—l. 18,—perhaps the correct reading is *Davvīkasya* i. e., of Davvika,). A similar connection can also be surmised in East Bengal, where the standard reed seemed to be somehow linked with the cubit length of the famous and upright Śivachandra.

The last, though not the least, point for consideration is the method, by which the lands sold, were ordered to be separated and the boundaries defined. It is a unique method perhaps mentioned for the first time, of defining the boundaries by marking the four quarters by chaff cinder, as had been ordered to be done by our plate (*chirakāla-sthāyi-tushāṅgārādi-chihvāiś-chatur-ddiśo niyamyā*—l. 19). It seems that the process was to dig up some earth along the line of demarcation all round the land in question and to fill it up with chaff cinder, thus preventing anything to grow on this demarcating line. So this bare line served as an effective and permanent boundary for a land sold on the basis of perpetuity. It seems that the method has a parallel in the modern practice of setting up pillars as permanent boundary posts.

So this newly discovered plate, some 1500 years old, though conforming in general to similar other documents in North and East Bengal, has some new and interesting informations for us. Its importance does not die away from the fact that as many as eight such documents, ranging in date within a comparatively short period of a little over 100 years, have been found in North Bengal. Rather, such a wealth of records signifies the existence of a prosperous civilisation, all through the region, of which further evidences are sure to be coming up on systematic exploration and excavation of older sites.

ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI.

Atal Bihari Ghosh.

Like many other expressions used in the Tantric scriptures these two expressions are very greatly misunderstood. Followers of other forms of faith antagonistic to Hinduism which should more properly be called Brahmanism, point out the phallic emblem as obscene and impure representation of Śiva. In this respect, I regret to say, the Christian missionary sets a very bad example. Sexual symbolism is common to most of the forms of faith that we know of. The Christian Cross has, by some people, been held to be a symbol of this kind. The picture of the blessed Mary in a lozenge is also emblematic of the same idea. Other examples may also be pointed out, but these few cases will serve my purpose. It is not necessary to crowd this paper with examples. The phallic emblem, above referred to, of Śiva describes the union of Śiva and Śakti, for it is out of the union of Śiva and Śakti that the world originated. There is nothing in this emblem that could offend the sensibility of even the most fastidious. When the Brahmanic scriptures speak of the union of Śiva and Śakti it is not to be understood that they speak of the union on a material plane, for the simple reason that they are not of matter. The Devas and Devīs (translated erroneously as Gods and Goddesses) are not anything which belongs to the material world but are merely forces which function in union with one another. This has got to be put in a material form for the apprehension of the ordinary man to whom the higher and more subtle aspect is incomprehensible. It may be noticed here that everything, in this world, has different aspects for persons of different degrees of competency. I shall deal with this later on. But the different aspects, I have spoken of, are the gross, the subtle, the transcendent and that which is beyond this last. The Sanskrit terms for these aspects are, *Sthūla*, *Sūkshma*, *Parā* and *Parātīta*. It is by degrees and by undivided attention and strenuous practice that the higher aspects can be realised. Here only a general conception of what the union of Śiva and Śakti means can be given.

Śiva represents the wisdom aspect and Śakti the power aspect as manifested in creation. Śiva means the beneficent being and also the ruler, and Śakti means power. Their union is represented by some as the co-operation of the blind and the lame. Śakti as mere power is blind and Śiva as mere wisdom is lame. It is only when the two are united that they can move and Śiva is spoken of as seated on the shoulder of Śakti directing her the way she has to go. It comes to this, therefore, that Śiva without Śakti is inanimate. This also is expressed by a text which says that Śiva without Śakti is a corpse (*Sava*). This two-fold aspect is exemplified in everything we ourselves do as human beings. When we think and come to a decision about anything it is the Śiva which functions. When we express our decision in words it is the Śakti in us which functions. It is by the union or *Maithuna* between these two that the uttered word comes forth. The word *Maithuna* means the union or association of two entities. It may thus mean sexual union and to the coarse-minded that is the meaning that occurs first. When we speak both the upper and lower lips are used. This is an act of *Maithuna* between the two lips out of which comes speech. When we discuss with a friend the merits and demerits of any subject there is an act of *Maithuna* between the two minds, and it is this word *Maithuna* which frightens many men.

Śiva and Śakti thus represent different aspects of the supreme function which is the cause of creation. Even in India there are thinkers who are not prepared to accept the Śakti aspect. There is an instructive story told about Śaṅkarāchārya, the great Vedantist. It is said that he did not at first accept the reality of Śakti. One day when he had concluded doing the prescribed practices on the bank of the river Ganges in holy Benares he found that he could not get up from the posture he was seated in. His attention was drawn to a beautiful young woman who was coming out of the river and he appealed to her to help him to get up. The lady replied, "Why, my son, you are an able-bodied young man, why can't you get up yourself"? Śaṅkara replied, "Mother, I have not the śakti (power) to do so". She in answer said, "But you do not believe in Śakti, my son," and vanished. It is said that it was after this incident Śaṅkarāchārya composed that famous hymn called "*Ānandalahari*" or the "Wave of Bliss", of which there is a translation by Arthur Avalon. This hymn

is an adoration of Śakti. There are present day scholars who are doubtful about Śaṅkara's authorship of this hymn. But this can be proved without much trouble. The union of Śiva and Śakti can be illustrated another way. We all know that without the aid of the vowels no consonant letter can be uttered. The consonants are Śiva and vowels are Śakti. The English alphabet is not well suited to illustrate this, but one can, with very little difficulty see my point. It is only by the *Maithuna* or union of the vowel and the consonant that the letter can be pronounced.

The sacred scriptures of India, both Vedic and Tantric, are agreed that it is out of the union of two that creation emanated. The Upanishads speak of the Brahman and Māyā, the Tantras of Śiva and Śakti. It is not that all Tantras speak of Śiva and Śakti. Different Tantras give different names but the concept is the same.

Buddhism, which is a rebellious offspring of Brahmanism, also has this twofold aspect. The *Guṇakāraṇḍa-Vyūha*, a Buddhist work of great authority, says that out of the union of Śambhu or Ādi Buddha with Prajñā creation came. The Judaistic Kabbala has the twofold aspect of Jehovah and Elohim. The Moslems say that out of the union of Allā and Erādā (Ichchhā) creation originated.

Women of the present day will be disinclined to accept that man represents the wisdom aspect and woman the power aspect, but this is a passing phase and is bound to pass away. And, after all is said and done she is the more important factor. It has been questioned why should any one worship Śakti in preference to Śiva. The answer is given above and it is also a question of temperament. To some people the mother is more dear than the father. And then strictly speaking by worshipping Śakti we worship Śiva also. The two cannot be separated. The Sanskrit word is *Abhinnābhāva*—non-separateness. Can we separate heat from fire, liquidity from water, the moon-beam from the Moon? If we cannot do these, we cannot separate Śiva and Śakti. I have used the word worship, but the word worship, as understood in the West, has no high place with us in the path of spiritual progress. The Sanskrit word for worship is "*Pūjā*" and *Pūjā* is for those who are on the material plane. Those who are on the path of enlightenment, do *Sādhanā* which cannot be translated by a single

English word. *Sādhana* includes practices and observances which help the aspirant in his upward path towards realization. Each aspirant follows the path selected for him by his or her Guru or spiritual preceptor. The preceptor very seldom, if ever, initiates the disciple into his own mode of *Sādhana*. The path chosen is that for which the disciple has a natural inclination and therefore suited to his competency. The Guru may be a Śaiva or a Śākta and the disciple a Vaishṇava and vice versa. The Guru of the true type never insists like Christian sectarians that in the matter either of *Pūjā* or *Sādhana* the disciple should follow the path which he himself does. For the matter of that, even a Christian may come within the Brahmanic fold if he can see that Jehovah and Elohim are but emanations of the "AIN-SOPH", the 'limitless one', which is but a Hebrew conception of the Brahman or Śiva. Such being the state of things among the different sections of Brahmanic-faith there can, in essentials, be no conflict between them. To give an example, there is a common belief that there is a conflict between Śaivism and Śāktaism on one side and Vaishṇavism on the other. There is however no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Śiva, we have seen, represents cosmic wisdom and beneficence and Viṣṇu is the spirit which pervades the universe. One of the names of Viṣṇu is Nārāyaṇa which means that Being which abides (*Ayana*) in collective humanity (*Nāra*) and for the Vaishṇava also the Śakti of Viṣṇu is inseparable from Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is worshipped generally under the name of Kṛishṇa. It is a noteworthy fact that when mention is made of the two aspects the name of the feminine or Śakti aspect comes first. Gaurī, for instance, is one of the names of Śakti as consort of Śaṅkara, which latter is a name of Śiva and when these names are mentioned they are spoken of as Gauri-Śaṅkara. Similarly they speak of Pārvatī-Parameśvara, Pārvatī being another name of Śakti and Parameśvara that of Śiva. Similarly the Vaishṇavas speak of Rādhā-Kṛishṇa, Rādhā being the consort of Kṛishṇa, of Sītā-Rāmā, and so forth.

Interested persons in India speak disparagingly of Śakti worship. They hope that if they succeed in bringing discredit to the practices of the Śaktas (this being the name by which the *Sādhakas* of Śakti aspect are called) they may get some converts. It is said that the worshippers of Śakti indulge in

unbridled license, drink wine and are guilty of all that is discreditable to human nature. But all this is contrary to fact. The rituals prescribed are not merely to curb all inclinations but to eradicate from the *Sādhaka's* very nature anything that is likely to disturb him in his *Sādhana* or ritualistic observances.

Preservation of the vital principle is the aim of all the different Tantras whether Śākta, Śaiva, Vaishnava or any other class. Instructions are given in a manner the westernised mind will not easily understand. Unbridled license in any direction cannot help in the path of *Sādhana*.

A note on the reign of Alauddin Firuz Shah III of Gaud.

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It has generally been believed that Alauddin Firuz Shah of Gaud reigned only for three months in 939 A. H. (= 1532 A. D.). According to Stewart who bases his history of Bengal on the *Riyaz-us-salatin*,¹ Alauddin Firuz Shah succeeded his father Nusrat Shah and reigned only for three months at the end of which he was murdered by his uncle, Mahmud Shah, who usurped the Government. This view has generally been accepted by subsequent historians.² Thus although the Calcutta edition of the *Riyaz* records three years as the duration of his reign, its English translator Maulvi Abdus Salam observes as follows : "Stewart who bases his history on the *Riyaz* mentions 'three months' which he must have found in his copy of the manuscript of the *Riyaz*, and which appears otherwise more consistent chronologically."³

A few months ago I had the privilege of examining a silver coin of Alauddin Firuz Shah issued from Husaynabad in A. H. 938 in the possession of Maulvi

1 *Riyaz* is the only history that records the name of Firuz Shah.

2. e. g. Blockmann and Marsden.

3. This view has been endorsed by Blockmann also (*J. A. S. B.*, 1873, p. 298).

Sharfuddin Ahmed, B. A. of Rajshahi, who was persuaded by the writer to present it (Fig. 5) to the Museum of the Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi.

The legends on its two faces are :

Obverse.

السلطان بن
السلطان بن السلطان
علا والد نيا وا لد ين
ابو المظفر فيروز
شاه السلطان

Reverse.

بن نصر تشاه
السلطان بن حسين شاه
السلطان حسيني خلد
الد ملكه و سلطا نه
حسينا باد ٩٣٨

Two other silver coins of Alauddin Firuz Shah issued from Husaynabad has been mentioned in Wright's "Catalogue of coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta", Vol. II, p. 179, Nos. 220, 221.¹ In both cases the date has been read as 939 A. H. So far as can be observed from the facsimile the date in number looks more like 938. It is also noteworthy in this connection that an inscription of the reign of Alauddin Firuz Shah was obtained from Kalna (J. A. S. B. Vol. XLI, 1872, p. 332 and No. 2, Plate III of J. A. S. B., 1873) which is dated 1st Ramazan 939 A. H.

It is well known that Ramazan is the 9th Arabic month, and as the coin above referred to is dated 938 A. H. it is obvious that Alauddin Firuz Shah must have reigned for more than "three months".

The first dated record of Alauddin Firuz Shah's father Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah is a coin of 925 A. H. (I. M. C. No. 202) and his latest dated record is an inscription of 938 A. H. (J. A. S. B., 1874, pt. I, p. 308; Ravenshaw," p. 94, plate 58, No. 24). The earliest dated records of Giyathuddin Mahmud Shah III who murdered Alauddin Firuz Shah and usurped his throne are two silver coins of 933 and 938 A. H. (I. M. C. No. 222, 223). It thus appears

1. Also Blockmann in J. A. S. B. 1873, p. 298, where he has mentioned one coin of 939.

that he set up an independent Government even in the reign of Nusrat Shah in a particular part of the kingdom of Gaud. It is also mentioned in the Riyaz that he was exalted to the rank of a nobleman even in the life time of Nusrat Shah and that he conducted himself like an Amir. The writer from whom the author of the Riyaz took this information must have tried to suppress the unpleasant fact of rebellion, and in order to save the prestige of Nusrat Shah has shown in polite language the activities of the rebel to have been permitted by him. Very unfortunately the mint towns of the two aforesaid coins of Mahmud Shah could not be ascertained. It has therefore remained yet uncertain in which part of the kingdom of Gaud Mahmud rebelled.¹ It is not also yet definitely known in what year he put an end to the life of Alauddin Firuz Shah and seized the throne of Gaud. In any case this must have happened before 941 A. H. to which date belongs his earliest known record of Gaud, an inscription from Sadullapur, Malda. In these circumstances it is not unreasonable to assume that Alauddin Firuz Shah reigned for three years (i. e. 938 to 940 A. H. or 1531 to 1533 A. D.) at Gaud, as recorded in the Calcutta edition of the Riyaz and not merely for 3 months, the rebel Mahmud continuing his rule in the meantime in the territories that he had formerly acquired.

Rajshahi inscription of Ghiyathuddin Bahadur Shah: 966 A. H.

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About twenty years ago this inscription was brought by Maulvi Belaluddin Ahmed of Rajshahi to his residence at the Hetam Khan Mahallah from the village Kumarpur about twelve miles west of Rajshahi. According to his statement it was found lying under a tree near a partially ruined brick-mosque which is believed to be not older than two hundred years. The village Kumarpur contains the shrine of a Muslim saint popularly known as Mukarram Sahib.

1. His coin dated 939 A. H. (No. 224 I. M. C.) contains Husaynabad which town has not yet been identified.

Postscript

Since the above note on the reign of Alauddin Firuz Shah III had been in print, I had the opportunity of examining about 20 coins of Alauddin Firuz Shah in the Dacca Museum. Two of them issued from the Muhammadabad mint are clearly dated 938 A.H.

The shrine consists of a tomb of finely polished black stone within the four-walls ($2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits thick) of a court of about 12 cubits square. There are also three tombs outside the court—two of white and black stones and one of rough gray stone—popularly ascribed to the followers of the saint. Maulvi Belaluddin kept the inscription with himself till recently I came to know of it and he was kind enough to give it for my use at my request. I presented it to the Varendra Research Society and it is now being preserved in the Society's Museum. It is published by me for the first time from the original.

The inscribed surface (Fig 3) which occupies only one side of two rectangular slabs of black basalt measures about ($13+20''$) \times $9''$ and consists of only two lines engraved in Tughra character each line of about $4\frac{1}{2}''$ breadth. The language of the inscription is Arabic. A small portion of the right hand side stone is broken at the right corner at the beginning of the inscription but that does not inconvenience the reading.

The inscription begins with the saying of the Prophet Muhammad : who builds a mosque in this world God builds for him in the next world seventy castles accomplished with gold ruby and coral, and records the erection of a mosque and a wall by Sulayman in the reign of Ghiyathuddunya waddin Abul Muzaffar Bahadur Shah during the months of 966 (1558-9 A. D.)

Thus the inscription appears to have been set up on a mosque of about four hundred years but the half-ruined mosque at Kumarpur near which it was found is believed to be not more than two hundred years old. It is quite likely, therefore, that the inscription was brought from among the ruins of an older mosque and set up on the Kumarpur mosque of a comparatively recent date.

A Kusumba inscription (J. A. S. B. Vol. LXXIII, 1904 part I p. 117) of Sultan Ghiyathuddin Bahadur Shah's reign (962-968 A. H.) records the erection of a mosque in 969 A. H.) by Sulayman¹. The inscription runs thus :—

Text

(1) قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ بَنَى لِلَّهِ مَسْجِدًا يَتَغَى بِهِ رَجُلٌ اللَّهُ بَنَى
اللَّهُ لَهُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مِثْلَهُ فِي عَهْدِ السُّلْطَانِ الْمُعَظَّمِ الْمُكَرَّمِ غِيَاثِ (2) الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

1. Other inscriptions of the reign of Ghiyathuddin Bahadur Shah are :— (a) Iainatal : 964 A. H. ; (b) Kalna (Burdwan) : 967 A. H. and (c) Calcutta Museum : 967 A. H., and the date of the coins of the reign ranges from 954-68 A. H.

بہادر شاہ السلطان بن محمد شاہ غازی خلد اللہ ملکہ و سلطانہ و علی امرہ و شاہ نہ و عز جندہ
و برہا نہ بنا کردہ سلیمان دام عدلہ فی سئۃ ست سنین تسعما یۃ

Translation.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Who builds a mosque for God desiring thereby the face of God, God builds for him the like of it in paradise". In the reign of the exalted and benevolent Sultan Ghiyath-uddunya waddin Abul Muzaffar Bahadur Shah, the sultan, son of Muhammad Shah Ghazi, (may God perpetuate his kingdom and authority, may his command and dignity be exalted and may his army and argument become illustrious) built by Sulayman (may his justice be lasting) in the year 966.

It will be seen that the purport and the language of these two inscriptions are almost similar and specially the benedictions after the name of the king are identical. They are peculiar to these two inscriptions alone. Moreover, the dates of both are the same and the founders of both the mosques bear the same name. Considering the coincidence of dates, the names of the founders and the almost similar language of these two inscriptions, I am led to think that the same Sulayman, the converted zemindar Chilman Majumdar of Mauza Kusumba, was the founder of both the mosques on which they appear to have been originally set up. Moreover, I venture to suggest that the present inscription under note originally belonged to one of the ruined mosques at Kusumba wherefrom it might have been subsequently brought to Kumarpur and attached to a mosque of a recent date. The present discovery is therefore an addition to the three Kusumba inscriptions already noticed in my "Muslim Inscriptions of Kusumba" (Annual Report of the Varendra Research Society for 1931-32).

Text.

(1) قال النبی صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم من بنی مسجدا فی الدنیا بنی اللہ تعالیٰ فی
الآخرة سبعین قصرا مکملا با لہ و لب و لیا قوت و المرجان بنی هذه المسجد و الجدار فی عہد
السلطان (2) المعظم المکرم غیاث الدنیا و الدین ابو المظفر بہادر شاہ سلطان ابن محمد شاہ
سلطان غازی خلد اللہ ملکہ و سلطانہ و علی امرہ و شاہ نہ و عز جندہ و برہا نہ بنا ہما سلیمان
شہر ست سنین تسعما یۃ۔

Translation.

The Prophet (the Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said "Who

builds a mosque in this world, the great God builds in the next world seventy castles accomplished with gold, ruby and coral. This mosque and the wall were built in the reign of the exalted and benevolent Sultan Ghiyathuddunya waddin Adul Muzaffar Bahadur Shah, Sultan, son of Muhammad Shah Sultan Ghazi (May God perpetuate his kingdom and authority, may his command and dignity be exalted and may his army and argument become illustrious) Sulayman built them during the months of 965.

Mahalakṣmi

Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, M. A.

Devyā yayā tatam = idam jagat = ātmaśaktyā,

Nihśeṣa devagaṇaśakti samūhamūrttyā ।

Tām = ambikām = akhiladeva-maharṣipūjyām,

Bhaktyānatāh sma vidadhātu śubhāni sā nah ॥

Devīmāhātmyā, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, chap. IV, v. 2.

"May that Devī by whose power this world was spread,

The perfect form of powers of countless Devas.

The Mother worshipped by all Devas and Maharṣis,

Do good to us".

Thus did the gods, headed by Indra, pray to the goddess just after she killed the buffalo demon. She was made up of the fierce radiance of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and all other gods, all of them contributing also to the formation of her limbs as well as her ornaments. The story of her appearance is given in the *Devīmāhātmyā*¹ of the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and the *Brahmavaivartta Purāṇas*, as well as in the *Devībhāgavatam*,² and it is practically the same every where with only a greater detail in the last two.

Armed with a boon from Brahmā that no male being, whether a god, demon or man, will be able to overpower him, Mahiṣāsura, the demon king, fought for the lordship of the heaven and after a struggle of full hundred years

1. *Devīmāhātmyā*, chap. 2.

2. *Devī Bhāgavatam*, Skandha 5, chap. 8 and 9.

wrested its sovereignty from Indra. The vanquished gods with Brahmā at the head sought shelter with Śiva and Viṣṇu and related at length their discomfiture at the hands of Mahiṣāsura. Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā got incensed and from their anger issued a great radiance to which was added the radiance emitted by all other gods. From that accumulated effulgence emanated a goddess radiating the whole universe by her resplendent beauty. Emanating from the combined effulgence of all the gods she partakes of the three attributes *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and is named *Mahālakṣmī*.³ Viṣṇu asked the gods to furnish the goddess with their respective weapons and the request was readily acceded to. Śiva gave her the *śūla* (trident), Viṣṇu *chakra* (wheel), Varuṇa *śaṅkha* (conch), *pāśu* (noose) and *padma* (lotus), Agni *śakti* (dart), Vāyu *chāpa* (bow) and *iṣudhi* (arrow case full of arrows), Indra *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* (bell) Yama *daṇḍa* (staff) *asi* (sword) and *charma* (shield), Brahmā *akṣhamālā* (rosary) and *kamaṇḍalu* (water pot), Viśvakarmā *paraśu* (axe), Kuvera golden *pānapātra* and Tvaṣṭā *godā*. Sūryya gave lustre in all the parts of her body and the Himalayas furnished her with a vehicle, the Lion. The *Matsya Purāṇa*, however, narrates a different story as regards the vehicle. There it is said that when the gods prayed to the goddess imploring her protection, which she assured, she asked of them for a vehicle which would be able to bear her weight while fighting. Thereupon the great god Viṣṇu offered himself for the purpose in a leonine shape. Thus accountred with the divine energy, with divine ornaments and weapons and with a divine vehicle the goddess thundered a laugh which penetrated even to the region of the Asuras. The Asura host hurried up and saw a beautiful goddess, ready for a fight with various weapons in her many hauds. The earth bends under her weight, her crown reaches up

3. Cf. *Durgā saptaśatī, vaiṣṇavika rahasya*

Sarvadevasarīrebhyo = yābir = bhūtāmitaprabhā !

Triguṇā sā *Mahālakṣmī* sāksān = Mahiṣamarddinī ||

Also *Devī Bhāgavatam*, 5th Skandha, chap 8. Verse 43-44.

Pasyatām tatra devānām tejahpuñjasamudbhavā !

Babhub = ātivarānārī sundarī vismayapradā ||

Triguṇā sā *Mahālakṣmī* sarvadeva śarīrajā !

Aṣṭādāsa bhujāramyā trivarṇā viśvomohinī ||

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, though it does not give any particular name for the goddess indicates however that She is *Mahālakṣmī* from the fact that it makes *Mahālakṣmī* the presiding goddess of the *Madhyama charita* which narrates this theme.

to the sky and her lustre illuminates the three worlds. Immediately commenced the fight in which the whole host, including the generals of the demon king, was routed. Mahiṣāsura himself came up for the fight and was eventually destroyed.

Mythologically the most important thing related about the goddess is that of her slaying the demon Mahiṣāsura, and representations of this dread avenging aspect of the goddess with six, eight, ten, twelve, eighteen and even twenty hands have been met with rather in abundance. A unique image, recently discovered, seems to represent the goddess Mahālakṣmī just as she has appeared out of effulgence emitted by the gods. The gods have furnished the weapons and ornaments, the vehicle, the lion has also come forward and the goddess is being prayed to by the gods and the sages just the calm and benign aspect immediately before launching forth on the inevitable part which has occasioned her appearance.

The image referred to appears in the village Simla in the district of Rajshahi. It shows a low *triratha* pedestal which bears a votive inscription, *Deyadharmma (rmmo) ya (yam) Suṇa (ṭa) kasya*, indicating that the image is a pious gift of Suṇaka or Suṭaka. A grimacing lion sits on the pedestal as also a worshipper with a garland; on the back of the lion rests a double lotus (*mahāmbuja*) on which the goddess sits in *līlāsana*, right leg dangling down and resting on another lotus. She has twenty hands holding different weapons and has all the usual ornaments beginning with the *nupura* (anklet) upwards. She is decked in an embroidered *sari* and has an *uttaraya* (scarf) passing round her body. The main right and left hands hold a fruit (?) and a *śaṅkha* respectively. Of the remaining hands, the weapons in two right and two left have been lost. The other hands show from downwards, *varada* (granting boon), *asi* (sword) *abhaya* (granting assurance) *chakra* (wheel), *mulgara* (mallet), *śūla* (trident) and *vāṇa* (arrow), which is being drawn out from the arrow case, in the right, and *kamanḍalu* (water pot), *Dhanush* (bow), *ghaṇṭā* (bell), *pāsa* (noose), *padma* (lotus), *gadā* (mace) with its upper portion broken, and *kheṭaka* (shield) in the left. All these hands are wonderfully unified into an organic whole, symbolising concentrated energy which the goddess stands for. The neck is marked by *trivali*, and the face, though mutilated, has a calm and serene expression

permeating all through. She wears a *jaṭāmukuta* (matted tiara) over which is represented a miniature Liṅga. The back slab above has completely gone. From stylistic indications and letter forms it appears to date in the tenth century A. D.

From the description we have given of the goddess Mahālakṣmī from the *Purāṇas* and the *Devībhāgavatam* it appears that she has eighteen hands. Almost simultaneously she is, in those works again, attributed with a thousand arms (thousand of course in the sense of innumerable).⁴ It appears then that the goddess can have any number of arms, though eighteen is the conventional number. According to the description above she has eighteen attributes or weapons all contributed by the gods and they are the same as given in her *dhyānas* in the *Chandīkalpa*⁵ and in the *vaikṛitīkaraḥasya* of the *Durgāsaptaśatī*.⁶ The list, which we have given before, does not, I hope, require a repetition. The image in question bears as much as twelve of this list, such as *śūla*, *chakra*, *śankha*, *pāśa*, *pālma*, *Dhanush*, *vāṇa*, *ghaṇṭā*, *asi*, *charma*, *kamaṇḍalu* and *gadā*, though the order laid down in the *Durgāsaptaśatī* has not been strictly followed. The four hands, of which the weapons have been lost, most probably held four of the remaining six, the last two being replaced in this particular specimen by fruit (*mātuliṅga* (?)), which in the *Pradhānilīlā rahasya* of the

4. Cf. *Devīmāhātmya*, *Madhyamacharita*, chap. 2, verse. 39.

Diśobhujasahasreṇa samantād = vyāpya samsthitam |

as contrasted to the description where it has made provision for only eighteen hands.

Also *Devībhāgavatam*, 5th *Skandha*, chap. 8, verse 46.

Aṣṭādaśabhujā devī sahasrabhujamaṇḍitā |

Also *Durgāsaptaśatī*, *Vaikṛitīkaraḥasya*.

Aṣṭādaśabhujā pūjyā sā sahasrabhujā satī |

5. *Akṣasrakparaśu gad = eṣukulīśam padmam dhanuh kuṇḍikām* |
Daṇḍam śaktim = asīñcha charmmajalajam = ghaṇṭām = surābhājanam ||
Śūlam pāśa = sudarśane cha dadhatīm hastaiḥ prabālaprabhām |
Seve sairibhamarddinīm = iha Mahālakṣmīm sarojasthitām ||
6. *Aṣṭādaśabhujā pūjya-sā sahasrabhujā satī* |
Āyudhānyatra vakṣyante dakṣiṇādhaḥ karakramāt ||
Akṣamālā kamalam vana-si kulīśam gadā |
Chakram triśūlam paraśu śaikho ghaṇṭā cha paśakah |
Śaktir = ddaṇḍāś = charmmachāpam pānapātram kamaṇḍalu |
Alankṛitā bhujālebhīr = āyudhaiḥ kamalāsanām ||

*Durgāsaptaśatī*⁷ is one of the attributes of the goddess, and by *mudgara*, also a characteristic weapon of the Devī. The image under note has twenty hands, a fact which need not seriously handicap us in our identification, as we have already shown that though eighteen is the most conventional number of arms, *vara* and *abhaya*, the two hands in this image in excess of the eighteen, are but the general attributes of a deity. But, here they seem to have more than a general significance. In all likelihood they represent that part of the episode, where the goddess, fully accoutred on the back of the lion, and just before entering on her dreadful part by that thundering laugh which went as a challenge to the demons, grants to the gods an assurance of security, saying with a benign and sweet smile,

Bhayam tyajantu gīrbhāṇā Mahishanmandachetasam |
Haṇishyāmi rane-dyaiva varadṛiptam vimohitam ॥⁸

"O, gods, shake off your fear. This very day I will slay the wicked and foolish Mahisha, haughty on account of (Brahmā's) boon".

The most significant point again is the miniature effigy of the Liṅga on the matted crown, a speciality which, so far as I am aware, was sometimes enjoined for the goddess Mahālakshmi only.⁹ This peculiarity thus sets at rest all doubts, if there be any, regarding our identification and the image really proves to be one of Mahālakshmi, the goddess that sprang from the combined radiance of all the gods in heaven.

We find here the Śakti, the personified energy in the shape of Mahālakshmi, as just formed concentrated. She has not yet emerged as the dread avenging power, punishing and destroying the wicked, as is her wont,¹⁰ and of which we find so frequent representations in art. The benign and gracious aspect of the Devī, granting boon and security to the righteous and to the afflicted—an aspect which has also been recognised as the underlying character of the Devī even in her *tāmasik* phase—though met with in literature, seems to be for the first time represented in art, all honour going to the anonymous Bengali artist who executed this fine and unique image.

7. Mātuliṅgam gadām kheṭam pānapātram cha vibratī |

8. *Devī Bhāgavatam*, 5th skandha, chap. 9, verse 31.

9. Cf. Hemadri, *Vratakhanda*, Bib. Ind., Vol. I, p. 86.

Vibhratī mastake liṅgam pūjanīyā bibhūtaye |

10. Cf. *Devīmahātmya*, chap. IV, verse 21.

Durvṛitta vṛittaśamanam tava devi śīlam.

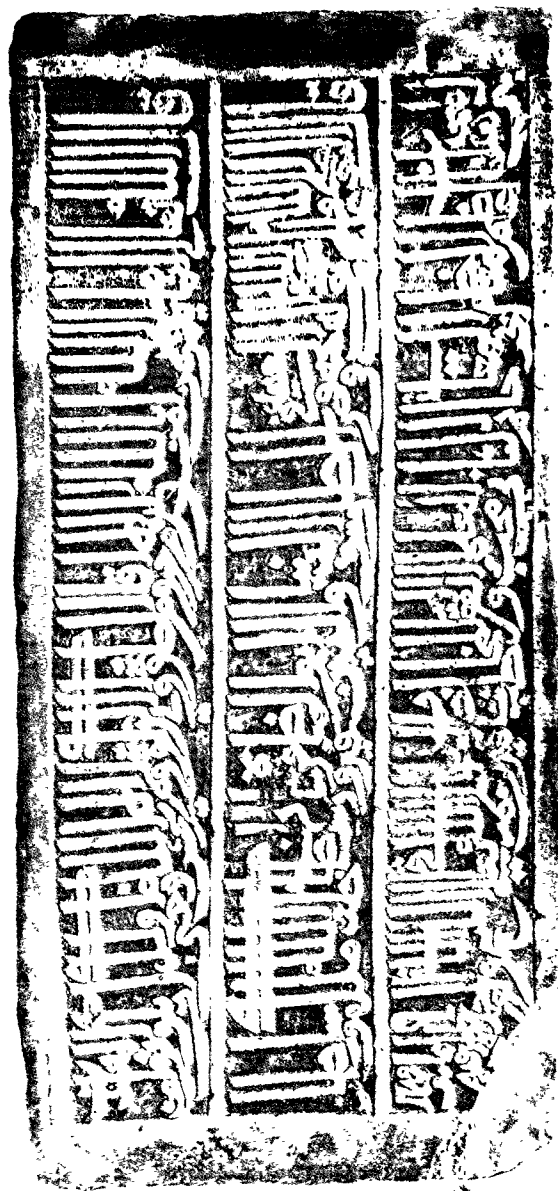


Fig. 1. Biraj Inscription of Sayfuddin Firoz Shah : A.H. 880



Fig. 2. Rajshahi Inscription of Jalaluddin Fath Shah : A.H. 887

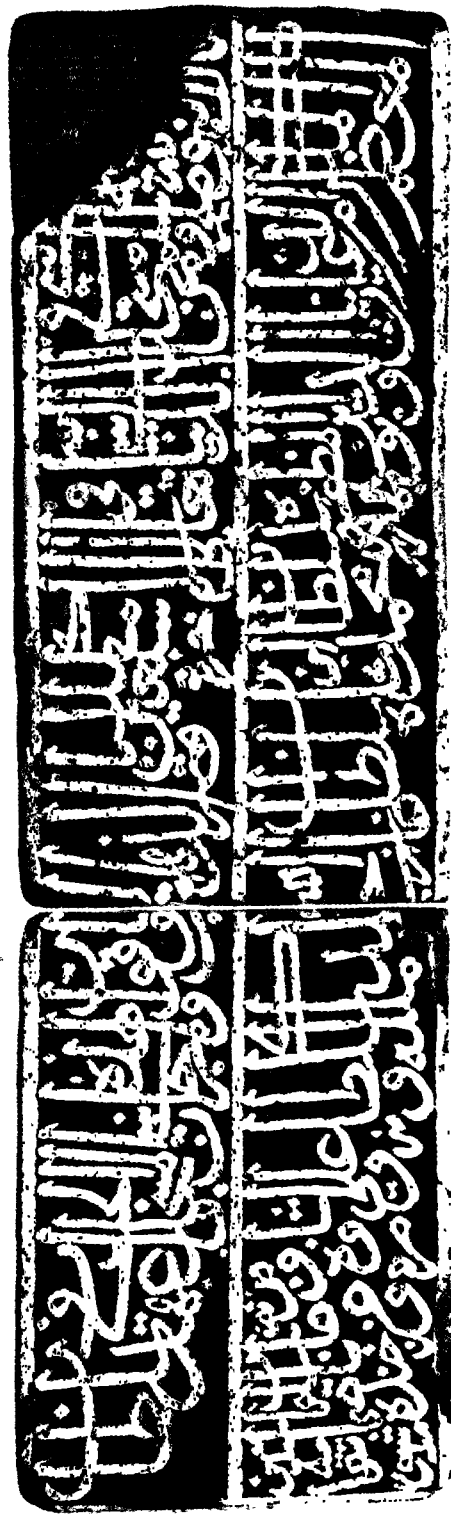


Fig. 3. Rajshahi Inscription of Ghiyasuddin Bahadur Shah : A.H. 966



Fig. 4. Mahalakshmi from Simla (Rajshahi).



Fig. 5. Coin of Alaauddin Firuz Shah III

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